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President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Filippi Balestra (San Marino), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 167 (*continued*)

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Mr. Erwa (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me first of all to take this opportunity to warmly thank the President, on behalf of my delegation, for having convened the General Assembly to consider agenda item 167, entitled "Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo". As the Assembly knows, the Congo is a brotherly African country to which we are bound by good-neighbourly relations, and my country is directly affected by the events taking place there.

Article 11 of the Charter determines the role of the General Assembly in the maintenance of international peace and security in order to prevent threats to the peace and suppress acts of aggression. As a principal organ of the Organization, its efforts complement those of the Security Council in safeguarding international peace and security.

The title of the agenda item that has brought us together today is clear and straightforward. We are facing a case of aggression against a sovereign State and a Member of this international Organization. That act of aggression has been confirmed by the admissions of the aggressors themselves. It is they who have offered unacceptable pretexts which are incompatible with international law, the Charter and the principles of peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourly relations. The Charter clearly stipulates that all States must refrain from the threat or use of force in resolving conflicts, and that they must have recourse to peaceful means to resolve disputes.

The countries in question cannot logically justify their aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the basis of security reasons. Had such reasons been legitimate, many countries would have committed against Uganda the acts that Uganda is now committing against its neighbours. Our view is very clear: aggression is a most dangerous crime that threatens the security and the future of the international community. It cannot, therefore, be justified in any way.

I do not wish to dwell on or repeat everything that we said to the Security Council last week concerning the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I wish to take this opportunity to reaffirm our support for all the efforts being made by the States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) under the chairmanship of President Chiluba of Zambia. We also pay tribute to all the efforts being made by President Kabila to bring peace and stability back to his country, including his recent call for a national dialogue involving all movements in the Congo, including the opposition and the rebel forces. The Sudan also pays tribute to the proposal of France. It welcomes that proposal to convene

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an international conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes region, as well as all national, international and regional efforts to restore the ceasefire.

More than ever before, Africa today needs peace and development so as to attain well-being for all its peoples, peoples who have suffered so much from the tumult of war. However, the main problem besetting Africa — a problem that prevents it from attaining these objectives — is, unfortunately, the tragedy it is experiencing as a result of the actions of some of its leaders who pursue malevolent strategies that run counter to the continent's interests of well-being, peace and stability.

The Ugandan regime is the best example of this trend. Its strategies are unacceptable because of its expansionist ambitions and the personal aspirations of its leaders, who dream of building empires, to the detriment of their people and the peoples of neighbouring countries.

The tragedy stems from the fact that such practices have spread as a result of the instigation and incitement of certain elements that are assisting the President of Uganda in employing these strategies on the continent. These elements assert that such leaders are the philosophers and prophets of Africa and the only ones defending democracy. We all know that these leaders are a long way from any democracy. Everyone knows that their people are repressed by a dictatorial regime. Perhaps the best description of the Ugandan leaders was provided by the representative of Zimbabwe in his speech to the Security Council on Friday when he said that a new leader had arisen in Africa who was trying to replicate the strategy and actions of Hitler.

We are all well aware in Africa that the Ugandan regime is currently a very dangerous destabilizing factor in the region and in the continent in general because of its hegemonistic and expansionist ambitions. The record of this regime is riddled with acts that are incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of the Organization of African Unity.

Uganda's attempted aggression against other countries is very well known to all. Uganda tried to destroy the southern Sudan by assisting rebel forces on the same pretext and with the same justifications that they adduce to justify their aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo — namely, the excuse that they are safeguarding their own security. The Ugandan leaders do not know that safeguarding their security means not undermining the well-being of their people in Uganda and to the west of the Nile.

The Ugandan regime is trying to disguise the fact that the Sudan's borders with the Democratic Republic of the Congo are dominated by the rebel movement supported by Uganda, and that was true even before the situation developed further in 1999. They seek to make use of that border. Uganda invaded the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the pretext of seeking to maintain peace and security. This is the same State that overtly hosted meetings between the armed Sudanese opposition and leaders of a major super-Power, with a view to plotting a *coup d'état* against the Sudanese Government, while all other African neighbours refused to host such a meeting on their territory.

Uganda has adduced self-defence to justify its aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as it did in February when it carried out similar operations against the Sudan. The last link in the chain of these acts committed by that shameful regime is the armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the pretext of safeguarding peace, and the pillaging of its wealth in order to give it to its own people. This is a violation of international law, particularly in the light of the massacres that have taken place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are astonished at what the representative of Uganda has said about massacres in the southern Sudan. We do not understand what he is talking about when he refers to "black people". The Sudan and all its people are a black African country. In Arabic, the Sudan means "the country of the black". So how can one categorize people in this way, describing black people according to the degree of colour? Has there been a massacre of black people in the Sudan and a massacre of less-black people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo? To us this is a completely inadmissible and shameful question. We never expected that a Ugandan official would come from his country to lower the tone of the General Assembly with these unacceptable excuses to disguise Uganda's crimes, which are obvious to all. Everyone knows that Uganda has exceeded all limits in the massacres committed in the 1990s.

Crimes cannot be justified on the pretext that those who commit them are dealing with other crimes. One cannot fight crime with crime. It must be done through peace, dialogue and justice. Uganda, as was noted yesterday, has striven to justify these massacres in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by asserting that this was preventive action, to prevent a larger massacre in the region. Even if one were to accept this unacceptable

logic, the representative of Uganda did not correctly explain the situation. Rather I think he thought none of us in this Hall were able to understand anything when he said that Uganda intervened as a result of its international responsibilities.

Who gave Uganda this authorization? We all know that the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide stipulates that States must take strict measures in accordance with international law to discharge their responsibilities to combat genocide. We do not know where Uganda came up with this pretext for permitting such acts of aggression, crimes, massacres and acts of genocide in the name of international obligations.

The real point is Ugandan aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan condemns that aggression. We hope that the international community will shoulder its responsibility and put pressure on the aggressor immediately to withdraw its forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to respect the sovereignty of that country, because it was the Ugandan forces that started the aggression. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected; that is the only way to restore stability and security to that country, enabling its people to live in peace, as it has so long aspired to do.

Mr. Türk (Slovenia): Slovenia associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Germany on behalf of the European Union and associated States. Additionally, we would like to make several specific points.

First, Slovenia welcomes the present General Assembly debate on the situation in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This debate is a welcome complement to the debate held in the Security Council several days ago, and is an opportunity to develop further the mutually reinforcing roles of the Security Council and the General Assembly with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security. In this context, we wish to emphasize the undeniable importance of Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the Charter, which give important powers to the General Assembly. Furthermore, and perhaps more specifically, the analysis carried out and the conclusions reached in the General Assembly could provide significant assistance to the Security Council in its search for an appropriate approach to the complicated issues of the situation in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The current debates in the Security Council and in the General Assembly have clearly focused on the situation as it has evolved since August 1998. That situation involves both internal and international aspects of the use of force. On the other hand, some of the features of the current use of force relate to events of the recent past; this needs to be borne in mind in any analysis of the situation.

The situation in and around the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of armed conflict characterized by human suffering and grave humanitarian problems. It is a situation involving fundamental principles of international law and affecting the long-term stability of a large part of Africa. The situation has deteriorated seriously since August 1998, when the rebellion in the country attained large proportions. Military interference by two neighbouring States, while motivated by seemingly genuine security concerns, transformed the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo into a regional threat to international peace and security. The subsequent military assistance of some other countries from the region to the Government has not brought about a solution — and indeed, a military solution is very unlikely.

The military action of the two neighbouring States against the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo represents a serious challenge to basic principles of international law. The States concerned must be called upon to respect the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We encourage African leaders, with the assistance of the Organization of African Unity and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, to redouble their efforts to achieve an early ceasefire. This will require, *inter alia*, direct talks between the Government and the rebels. A ceasefire will open the way to addressing all the other problems which the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are facing today. The United Nations as a whole should be ready to assist, when the moment comes, to maintain the cessation of hostilities and to help in stabilizing and normalizing the situation in the country and in the region.

Humanitarian issues and human rights problems are of great importance in the current situation. The recent history of the Great Lakes region is characterized by some of the most terrible crimes against humanity. The allegations of massacres and crimes against humanity

committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1996 and 1997 have still not been investigated. That task will have to be carried out. Statutory limitations do not apply to crimes against humanity.

Slovenia strongly condemns all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the current conflict. We condemn massacres of the civilian population, which have taken place mostly in the South Kivu province, since the outbreak of the conflict in August 1998. Most often the victims are innocent civilians — children, women and the elderly. A spread of the practice of genocide in the region must not be tolerated, let alone ignored. To the contrary, it requires specific action to end the impunity and to bring those responsible to justice. In this regard, we note with appreciation that a Ministry for Human Rights has been established in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is a step which demonstrates the readiness of the Government to act. We also welcome the Government's cooperation with the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Roberto Garettón, and would like to encourage the Government to continue this cooperation.

Furthermore, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has to redouble its efforts to strengthen the country's legal system. An impartial, credible and effective judiciary will make progress in the area of human rights possible.

We believe that the time of war must end and that steps towards the creation of a normal democratic environment should be taken very soon. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should create conditions which will allow a democratization process that is genuine and inclusive and that fully reflects the aspirations of all citizens. The international community needs to stress the importance of the internal political dialogue among all political and civil-society actors in the country. The democratization process needs to be resumed and should be led through the establishment of democratic institutions and respect for the basic principles of democracy. This will help create conditions for the Government to resume needed partnership with neighbouring countries. Partnership and cooperation, among three neighbouring States in particular, has to be rebuilt and would help create a stable environment in a region which today faces, among other problems, a serious security problem.

The international community should strongly encourage dialogue among the leaders of the countries in the Great Lakes region. Through this dialogue, regional leaders should honestly address the problems they are facing today. In this regard, Slovenia strongly supports the idea proposed by France of an international conference on the Great Lakes region, under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations. Such a conference should not be a single event, but a process which would include and address all the critical issues faced by the countries of the region, including, but not limited to, the issues of security and power-sharing.

Today's debate in the General Assembly and the open debate held in the Security Council last Friday on the same issue are among the first steps taken by the United Nations. Support for regional efforts towards a peaceful solution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has to be rendered by the international community as a whole. However, a lasting solution of the problems lies with the Congolese people themselves and with the peoples of the other countries of the region.

Mr. Babaa (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) *(spoke in Arabic)*: My delegation wishes to express its gratitude for the opportunity today to discuss this military conflict in the heart of Africa, which threatens to spread throughout the Great Lakes region and to lead to a long crisis that will undermine policies elsewhere on the African continent. This debate is significant in that it provides an opportunity for the General Assembly and the international community to continue the debate begun last Friday in the Security Council and to seek ways and means that will result in a peaceful settlement of this sad and regrettable conflict that has been going on for more than eight months and reach a national reconciliation that includes all parties.

We would like to pay tribute to the efforts made by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and, in particular, those made in accordance with the Lusaka agreement by President Chiluba of Zambia to achieve a peaceful settlement of this conflict, which threatens peace and security in the area and which may have grave humanitarian consequences.

My country is convinced that the political, economic, social and cultural problems confronting Africans are the natural results of two elements — history and geography — and that politics is merely an expression of those two factors. The history of Africa has been dominated by foreign occupation and foreign rule.

The politics of Africa is merely the result of those foreign occupations. The occupiers concluded conventions and agreements among themselves in which Africa's borders were drawn in accordance with their own interests. Africa's internal and regional conflicts are but a corollary of all this.

My country would like to state that it is fully aware of the letter and goals of the arguments put forward to the effect that it is high time Africans stopped using colonialism as an excuse. This argument would have been correct had Africans been the ones who divided single tribes among many States.

Social facts are stronger than the historical or geographical facts that created the political realities on the African continent today. Aware of this, my country has spared no effort within the framework of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to grapple with this problem in order to reach a just and equitable solution that will restore social conciliation in the Congo, in accordance with OAU instruments. This should take place away from any foreign circles whose only goal is hegemony and the monopolization of Africa's riches and markets in order to ensure their long-term interests and to create and nurture more problems by selling all kinds of arms to the parties in conflict.

In order to achieve this goal, our brother Colonel Muammar Al-Qadhafi, the leader of the revolution in Libya, convened many meetings in Libya, both small and large. Many African leaders attended those meetings. One of these meetings was a small African summit coordinated by the OAU and held at Surt, Libya, towards the end of last September. It was attended by the Presidents of Uganda, Chad, the Niger and Eritrea. Its communiqué called for the creation of an African force to replace the troops in Congo and also called for entrusting Colonel Al-Qadhafi, as the head of the Sahel-Sahara community, with the coordination of this peace process.

The Presidents of Zimbabwe, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Namibia and Malawi visited Libya last month and conducted intensive consultations on African problems with Colonel Al-Qadhafi. Foremost among those problems was the situation in the Great Lakes region.

As a result of those meetings and initiatives by Libya we were able, with the cooperation of the African countries, to overcome one of the main obstacles hampering the resolution of this problem, namely, the holding of a preparatory meeting in Libya among the Congolese parties. That meeting broke the deadlock and opened direct dialogue among the parties concerned. It was agreed that such meetings would continue outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As a follow-up to these efforts, Libya contacted the current Chairman of the OAU and other African Presidents in order to hold an emergency African summit to discuss the problem in the Congo, as well as other African conflicts. The emergency summit discussed the problem at the highest African level in order to find solutions to it. We look forward to the next regular African summit, which will be held in Algeria next July, in order to intensify the efforts to achieve this goal.

Many African meetings were held to find a solution for this problem and to cease the bloodshed in the Great Lakes region. Despite the fact that those meetings reflected the readiness of all parties to put an end to the bloody conflict, they did not lead to a ceasefire.

My country's position can be summed up as follows. First, there is a need to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Congo. Second, all problems among States of Africa must be solved through dialogue, negotiation and arbitration; resort to force must be avoided, in accordance with the conventions of the OAU and the United Nations. Third, efforts by any country to interfere should be brought to an end. Fourth, an African solution must be found within the framework of the OAU to solve this problem. Fifth, an African force must be established to keep the peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, safeguard its borders and prevent massacres. Sixth, a regional peace conference, under the auspices of the OAU and the United Nations, should be held among the countries concerned, in order to conclude agreements on good-neighbourliness, durable peace and economic development. Seventh, the United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, should seek solutions supporting the OAU solution to this conflict, including providing the necessary financial support. Finally, the United Nations should play a leading role, in conjunction with the OAU, to provide humanitarian solutions to the problem of refugees and displaced persons.

We call for the continued holding of such African meetings at any time and place in order to follow up these efforts with the parties concerned and to intensify the work of the contact group that emerged from the Lusaka process in order to reach an immediate ceasefire

and a just and lasting solution to this conflict that is tearing apart the African continent.

We also welcome President Kabila's declaration and his readiness to conduct a national dialogue with a view to reaching national reconciliation as a necessary step towards the establishment of durable peace and the restoration of stability and security in the region.

We call on the General Assembly to support the efforts of the OAU in this regard. We also call on all the parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to put an end to military actions, reach a ceasefire and make all the necessary preparations for national reconciliation and the timely holding of a regional conference to achieve comprehensive and lasting peace in the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Muchetwa (Zimbabwe): Let me begin by bringing to memory a comment, published in the *New York Times* of 29 May 1997, by Jeffrey Sachs of the Harvard Institute for International Development. Commenting on Kabila's victory over Mobutu, Sachs declared that

> "the West should save the morality lessons for later. First, the United States should abandon its call for early elections. These will have to wait."

A similar assertion had been made earlier on by United States Representative Donald Payne in a Voice of America radio broadcast. Payne was quoted by Voice of America as saying that

> "now is not the time for Western political standards of democracy ... A country that has been in existence for two days, I do not think that can be called undemocratic because they are not going to allow demonstrations."

These sentiments also found expression in Africa. Complaining of United States distrust of Kabila, South African President Nelson Mandela declared on 28 May of the same year:

> "You must judge what President Kabila is doing against the specific conditions that exist there. It would be suicidal for him to allow the operation of parties before he has a firm grip on the Government of the country. I think that we can trust him, on the basis of his record, to keep his word."

These comments were made during Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni's two-day visit to Pretoria to receive South Africa's highest honour, the Order of Good Hope Grand Cross.

The caution against holding elections for the sake of elections underscored one point: After decades of Mobutu's misrule, the Congo possessed neither the institutions nor the capacity to immediately sustain a plural political dispensation. Members of the Assembly are aware that, during the cold-war era, Congo's first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba, a great African patriot and nationalist who resolutely stood for African independence and was perceived to be "pro-East" — to use cold war jargon — had been replaced by Colonel Joseph Mobutu. Mobutu proceeded to turn his country into a bulwark for the West's strategic and ideological influence on the continent. This same Mobutu established one of the most undemocratic, autocratic and corrupt regimes Africa has ever known. When Kabila took power in May 1997, the Congo's social, economic and political institutions were non-existent and it is absurd that, a year after coming to power, Kabila should be accused of dictatorial tendencies and a military attempt from without the Congo made to oust him from office.

Allow me to remind this body that, when the investigation of the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo started in August last year, there were denials from Uganda and Rwanda that their forces were in the country. Now we hear a new tune that Uganda and Rwanda had signed an agreement with President Kabila to station their forces in the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that they might flush out Ugandan/Rwandese rebels — that is to say that both Rwanda and Uganda have their own rebels.

The allied forces were sent to the Democratic Republic of the Congo after an investigative team of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) — led by representatives of Zambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe — had concluded that the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo was not a rebellion but an invasion by Uganda and Rwanda.

The external military forces that are now engaged in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are seven. While Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi have invaded the Congo, Angola, Chad, Namibia and Zimbabwe have provided an allied defence force at the request of the Government in Kinshasa. All countries in eastern and southern African regions recognize the Kinshasa Government. It is noteworthy that the current Governments of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi came to power by military means

and have not faced the test of democratic, multi-party elections in their own countries. By contrast, the southern African nations that support Kabila are ruled by Governments which have won multi-party elections accepted as free, fair and representative of the will of their electorates.

The first unexplored issue is support for democratic development in the Great Lakes region. The political situation of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi and the support of undemocratic regimes have emanated from the corridors of the international financial institutions and some Western nations. Both Rwanda and Burundi are run by military regimes which have imposed ethnic minority rule on the majority within national boundaries, with no election in sight, for obvious reasons.

The invading States have not been at peace with themselves since their respective militaries seized power in 1986 and 1994, and the political opposition is getting increasingly restless at their refusal to hold plural democratic elections. Their systems of government range from pure military regimes to "no-party" systems.

Although international criticism of their political systems has been muted by the high-profile support they enjoy from the international financial institutions, they face armed opposition from supporters of other political parties and proponents of multi-party democracy who have no other means of expression. A reference to a "conspiracy of silence" may be too strong a language, but the fact remains that the international community has remained largely uncritical of the lack of democracy in Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, while vocalizing its criticism of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Presidents of the invading States have apparently seen no contradiction, as a result, in putting their names to a communiqué or communiqués with a number of their colleagues, calling for democratic elections in the Congo.

Another issue that merits mention is the question of those other massacres in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo that got President Kabila's Government into hot water with the United Nations and Western Governments when he refused access to human rights officials. The victims of the massacres were ethnic Hutu refugees who had fled from Rwanda and who may have included some of the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide, but eyewitness accounts indicate that many were women, children and elderly persons. It is now clear that they were the target of Rwandese Government forces and that Kabila was merely protecting his erstwhile allies from embarrassment and retribution. President Kabila's Government is now cooperating with United Nations Special Rapporteur Garreton, and any remaining evidence of the Rwandese army's excesses is likely to have been destroyed, as the area where the refugee massacres were perpetrated is now under the control of the Rwandese and Ugandan invading armies.

Allow me also to respond to a call made in the Assembly that President Kabila should engage in direct talks with the rebels of the so-called Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD). The recent resignation of one of the founding members and Vice-President of the RCD, Arthur Z'Ahidi Ngoma, claiming that the movement was not democratic, only confirms that the RCD is neither Congolese nor Democratic. Ngoma gave the following reasons for leaving the RCD: that the RCD was not representative of the Congolese people; that the RCD relies too much on Rwanda and Uganda for direction; that it was choosing war over peace; and, lastly, that the RCD had failed to mobilize people in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and was in fact acting against the wishes of those people.

The resignation of Ngoma came on the heels of that of Deogratias Bugera, who had announced in early February that he had broken ranks with the RCD to form the Movement of Reformists. It will be recalled that Bugera, a Tutsi from North Kivu, also helped to found the Alliance of Democratic Forces of the Liberation of the Congo (ADFL) and the RCD in 1996 and 1998, respectively.

It is becoming apparent to some rebel leaders that the best political position for anyone wanting to obtain leadership in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is to keep a distance from Rwanda and Uganda and seek greater inclusion. In this respect, Ngoma has announced the formation of another rebel faction that seeks to negotiate with Kinshasa. Kabila has welcomed Ngoma's decision to quit the RCD and indicated that Ngoma could go to Kinshasa anytime.

The eastern Congo coalition of Rwanda and Uganda is continuing to fortify its presence throughout the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The build-up is reportedly a preparation for a major military offensive targeted at Mbandaka, Lubumbashi and Mbuji Mayi. The Rwandese and Ugandan military preparations are bolstered by events unfolding in northern Angola, where the RCD rebel leader James Kabahere has joined forces

with UNITA and are battling the Angolan Government forces.

The massive infusion of arms into the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has scuttled any hope that Uganda and Rwanda are interested in a peaceful end to the conflict. While the aggressors may appreciate that scoring an outright military victory is out of the question, they hope that the current stalemate is in their favour. This position is dictated by a misperception that weaknesses exist within the pro-Kabila alliance. The late appearance of Rwandese President Pasteur Bizimungu, for example, at the recent Windhoek Summit illustrates the contempt with which the eastern Congo coalition treats the peace process.

The Foreign Minister of Uganda has decided to distort history in an endeavour to justify his country's military intervention in the Congo. This body has heard the Minister question whether Tanzania was wrong in opposing Idi Amin in the 1970s. But what the Minister decided deliberately to omit is that Uganda invaded Tanzania at the end of 1978 and occupied Tanzanian territory. That is very, very important. Tanzania then resisted that aggression and in the process managed to eject both the invading army and its leader, Amin, by June 1979.

In 1978, Amin of Uganda invaded Tanzania, a sovereign State, claiming that that part of Tanzania was Ugandan territory. Exactly 20 years later, in 1998, Museveni, also of Uganda, invaded the Congo, and he continues to do so to this day, occupying a large chunk of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in pursuit of so-called legitimate security concerns.

If history was our teacher, would anyone fail to understand why President Museveni admires Hitler so much? The parallel between Hitlerism and the events unfolding in the Great Lakes region have everything to do with the territorial ambitions of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

Uganda has also submitted that despite the remaining obstacles, there is hope that the regional peace efforts will succeed. What baffles my delegation is the source of this hope. In his address, the Minister of Uganda declared:

> "At the outset, let me assure the Assembly of Uganda's reaffirmation of, and commitment to, the United Nations Charter, the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and other regional and international conventions. Uganda has not behaved aggressively towards the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and neither is it responsible for the current crisis in that country". (*A/53/PV.95, p. 13*)

Mr. President, you are aware that the conclusion of a cease-fire agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo conflict is contingent on the identification of the parties to the conflict, who in turn should officially acknowledge their involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo imbroglio. This will make it possible to locate and verify the withdrawal of the external actors from the theatres of war once a cease-fire is in place.

Peace talks have been held since August 1998, and to this day the aggressors continue to deny their invasion. It is mind-boggling for the Minister to submit that

> "But all is not lost. It is the view of the Uganda Government that contrary to the pervasive pessimism about the prospects for reaching a negotiated settlement, a lot of progress has already been made." (*supra, p. 17*)

What progress when the aggressors continue to deny their aggression?

In conclusion, let me reiterate that both Uganda and Rwanda are interested in a protracted conflict because the very nature of their governments makes it impossible for them to survive outside a war situation. One of the fundamental causes of the conflicts in the Great Lakes countries — Burundi, Uganda and Rwanda — is the refugee-creating politics of exclusion practised by the ruling cliques. Another similarity between the three countries is that they are led by military or pseudo-military regimes that are averse to democracy. It is our view that because of these considerations, the eastern Congo coalition is comfortable with a drawn-out war which will offer sufficient justification to postpone democratic governance. On the other hand, an end to the Democratic Republic of the Congo-war would give impetus to an end of the wars in their individual countries. If an end to their own wars is followed by elections, then their survival in power may not be guaranteed.

Mr. Yacoubou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the delegation of Benin, I should like to join my colleagues in congratulating Mr. Opertti and thanking him for following up the initiative of the President of the Security Council and convening the General Assembly to

enable us to reflect together on one of the most pressing questions on the current international agenda: the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is distressing, to say the least, to note that the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is continuing, despite the many and various efforts and resources that have been devoted to it over many months. As many previous speakers in the Security Council and in the Assembly have acknowledged and reaffirmed, the prevailing situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is, in its complexity and because of what is at stake, one of the most serious threats to peace and security in the entire Great Lakes region and is therefore a serious obstacle to development in the African continent.

By focusing the attention of the international community on that situation, our meetings acquire even greater importance, as they are ultimately aimed at the common search for ways and means to relieve the suffering — suffering that takes many forms and is growing daily — of the Congolese people, who, like the other peoples of the subregion, aspire only to peace and development, having paid the heavy price of war for a number of years.

As we have stated on several occasions, Benin believes that a military solution to the settlement of this conflict must not be contemplated, as the conflict is above all political in nature. My country, together with many others here, is therefore in favour of a negotiated solution, which would involve, first, the conclusion of a ceasefire between the warring parties; secondly, the implementation of a process of national reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and thirdly, the installation of a negotiated mechanism for the establishment and maintenance of security and peace in the region.

As can be seen, those three elements call for dialogue and consultation, which my delegation believes are the best possible ways of settling a conflict, whatever its scale and underlying motivations. My country believes in the merits of dialogue and consultation. It has tested them through experience and can testify to their validity. That is why Benin unreservedly supports all diplomatic initiatives aimed at bringing about a peaceful settlement of the conflict, notably those led by the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community, in particular the wholehearted efforts of President Chiluba in the context of the Lusaka process.

In particular regard to that process, my country believes that it is a very important endeavour that must be properly completed and actively supported by adequate demonstrations of good faith and political goodwill in order to reach a ceasefire agreement that would doubtless pave the way to a peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict. By laying down their arms, the warring parties would effectively be promoting the establishment of the conditions necessary for consultation and dialogue, and thus for national reconciliation and the restoration of peace and security in the region.

In this context, my country welcomes the recent decision of the Congolese Government to convene a national dialogue aimed at bringing together all the factions and socio-political sectors of the country in order for them to reflect together on the future of the Congolese nation. The international community should help the Congo carry out that initiative so that the essential foundation can be laid for the achievement of a national consensus that would allow the whole of the Congolese nation to commit itself fully to the struggle for development — the only struggle worthy of being pursued in Africa today.

Extending that process of national reconciliation to all of the countries of the subregion would also seem to be a significant springboard for the prompt installation of the mechanisms necessary for the maintenance of peace and security throughout the subregion and for the reconstruction of the Congo and the other countries involved in this fratricidal conflict, which has lasted far too long.

A return to peace and stability, an essential prerequisite for the start of socio-economic development in the Great Lakes region, will remain mere wishful thinking as long as the various parties to the conflict refuse to heed the call for dialogue and consultation. The humanitarian situation today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the daily increase in the number of displaced persons and the serious and many violations of human rights committed by all parties to the conflict call for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

We wish to express the sincere hope that the warring parties will soon commit themselves to the path of reason and wisdom in order to give the initiatives that the international community is ready to undertake the best chance of success so that the tragedy and suffering of the Congolese people and the other peoples of the Great Lakes region can finally be brought to an end.

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): This is the third debate on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in five days, the first having taken place in the Security Council last Friday. This attests to the gravity of the subject, but, more importantly, to the need felt throughout the world to find a solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and those of the neighbouring countries want peace, not war. In peace, those countries have the opportunity to harness national resources to the benefit of their peoples. Social and economic development can take place only under conditions of peace and stability.

Unfortunately, however, the continued conflict on the soil of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is degrading the power of the Congolese Government to provide for its people. War is worsening the social and economic conditions of the people. National resources are being diverted to war instead of being spent on education, health, housing and other projects that reduce poverty and improve the living standards of the people.

The humanitarian situation is worsening with each passing day. Hundreds of thousands have been driven from their homes and have become internally displaced people or refugees pouring into neighbouring countries. In this respect, Zambia has received some 15,000 refugees in the last three weeks alone, and they are continuing to come.

The time has come for common sense to prevail. The time has come for the people involved in this conflict to say, "Enough is enough: the war must end".

The debate in the Security Council last Friday demonstrated, among other things, that President Chiluba's mediation effort on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, and that of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), should be allowed to continue. Several delegations took note of the fact that, as a result of the regional effort, a number of ingredients for a political solution had emerged. The first of these was the conclusion that this conflict would not be solved by military means, that only negotiations can end the war. In this regard, there is an urgent need for confidence-building measures among all the parties concerned. The other feature cited regarding the progress that the regional effort has made was agreement that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not negotiable. The next important plank is the agreement in principle to sign a ceasefire that would be followed by the withdrawal of all foreign forces. This would in turn open the way for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force. Implicit in all these steps would be the holding of a purely internal dialogue to create a conducive atmosphere in which the Congolese people themselves could decide what kind of future they want for themselves.

All this sounds very good, but we are not yet there. We have not signed the ceasefire agreement due to certain difficulties. We are still searching for a meeting of the minds. The hurdles that remain in the way of a negotiated solution are not insurmountable. Indeed, in inter-State relations nothing is impossible if there is the desire and the political will to give and take and move forward. We call upon the parties to think seriously about the untold suffering of men, women, children and the elderly which this war has brought about. We call upon them to realize the long-term negative impact and damage that continued conflict will have upon the social, economic and political development of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the other belligerents in this conflict.

Peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be divorced from peace and security in the wider region. In this regard, my delegation also supports the idea, originally floated by France, of holding, at an appropriate time, an international conference on peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region under the auspices of the United Nations and the OAU. Such a conference would go a long way towards addressing the whole gamut of issues that haunt the region of the Great Lakes. The solution of these problems would bring calm and tranquillity and set the region on a path to lasting peace.

Mr. Aboud (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): We must note that Africa is being torn apart by incessant, alarming wars, as well as by economic disparities that require special attention from the international community. However, Africa also is a continent of hope and of the future. I do not doubt that it will be able to meet the challenge now confronting it every day.

Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the subject of today's debate. Our task is an especially important one because the conflict is not limited to just one country; it threatens the stability of an entire region. The eight months of conflict that have led to a military stalemate show clearly that armed confrontations are not an appropriate solution. Only an immediate ceasefire, respect for the sovereignty and

territorial integrity of the States involved and a guarantee of stability in the region will make it possible to resolve the conflict peacefully.

The Congolese population is the first victim of this military conflict which is tearing the region apart, causing human rights to be trampled and creating the problem of displaced people. And let us not overlook the peoples of neighbouring countries, who live in constant terror and suffer the consequences of this conflict.

Efforts must be made to bring about a definitive return to peace and democracy in the region. We cannot but welcome the negotiations that have been initiated at the regional level by the Organization of African Unity, as well as those at the international level. We also hope that the United Nations will get further involved and take concrete actions in order to bring about effective negotiations and to promote the implementation of the Lusaka accords.

We join other delegations in supporting the search for a peaceful settlement to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. First, a ceasefire is necessary so that the parties to the conflict can negotiate effectively and find common ground leading to a definitive resolution of the conflict. An effort has been made in the framework of the Lusaka accords; however, the modalities for the ceasefire have to be further spelt out. In this connection, the Comoros Government welcomes the efforts undertaken by President Chiluba of Zambia and by the Southern African Development Community to bring about a ceasefire.

Secondly, security and stability in the region must be ensured. Thus, the principle of the national integrity, political independence and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the other States must be respected. That is why the military forces involved in the conflict must be withdrawn immediately and a supervision mechanism must be established, in keeping with the Lusaka accords.

To achieve those goals, a dialogue should be established between the civil and the political sectors of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so that all sectors together can arrive at a national consensus. This openness to dialogue will make it possible to alleviate the suffering of the Congolese people and to restore some international confidence regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Comoros supports the proposal to organize an international conference on the restoration of lasting peace in the Great Lakes region, under the auspices of the OAU and the United Nations. Security and development in the Great Lakes region will bring political and economic stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and this will undoubtedly make it possible to achieve national reconciliation.

My country is another eloquent example of how hotbeds of tension tax the resources of the international community. Unfortunately, we must note that over the last two years Comoran peoples, most specifically on the island of Anjouan, have been embracing separatism. The tragic events that have been taking place these last few months are a result of the unprecedented economic crisis that has stricken my country. To be sure, the effect of the incomplete independence of the Comoros must not be overlooked. The results of the economic and political instability that has existed since independence have certainly forced the Anjouanais to rebel against the central government. Nonetheless, such a rebellion could not persist without help from outside elements.

The efforts and commitments made and sustained since the onset of the crisis by the OAU Secretary-General, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim, and the countries of the region have been appreciated and deserve praise and support. I would like to recall that in April, as set forth in the Addis Ababa agreement, the OAU and Madagascar will hold an inter-island conference to find a solution to the problem tearing the Comoros apart. My Government is counting on the support of the international community for the success of that conference, which should bring together political forces and civil society, as well as the Comorans forced to live outside the country.

From this rostrum I would like to make a solemn appeal to the entire international community that it spare no effort so that the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros can regain its unity and its territorial integrity with respect for friendship and human dignity. International solidarity with the Islamic Federal Republic of the Comoros is indispensable for our economic recovery and for peace and security in this subregion of the world.

All efforts must be made to maintain peace and security in Africa.

Regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we hope that, in the light of his report on the causes of

conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, and with the help of the OAU, the Secretary-General will spare no effort to find a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply shall be limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Ndaruzaniye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I wish at the outset to join other speakers in congratulating the President of the General Assembly on the manner in which he has guided the work of the Assembly at the present session.

After the Security Council debate on the search for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my delegation had not felt it necessary to speak again on the item "Armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo". But since my country has been named in the course of the General Assembly debate, my delegation wishes to address certain allegations so that the Assembly will be left in no doubt about Burundi with respect to the essentially internal conflict that is tearing apart its great neighbour the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In Rwanda, on 1 November 1959, All Saints' Day was marked in fire and blood to celebrate what was called the "Rwandan social revolution". This was the first violent manifestation in this region of Africa of an ideology of extermination and genocide, and was to go down in history. Unfortunately, the political leaders of the time, including those of the United Nations, did not have the foresight to assess the dimensions of the evil, which was to be repeated on a frightening scale in the largest genocide of the latter part of the twentieth century — unfortunately, on the territory of that same country, Rwanda.

Yet the often violent manifestations of that evil have been seen regularly in nearly cyclical massacres in Rwanda, Burundi and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself. Let me cite as examples the massacres of the Bagogwe in Rwanda, the massacres at Busangana, the inferno at Kibimba in Burundi, and the killings at Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, then called Zaire.

When the Democratic Republic of the Congo's painful transition to independence in the 1960s saw the birth of the first armed militias, political leaders, including those in the United Nations, did not gauge what the refugee problem would become 40 years later, with refugee camps transformed into military training and arms-supply facilities, compromising any good-faith attempt to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable affected populations.

At that time, the young independent Kingdom of Burundi was welcoming its first African refugees from Congo and from Rwanda, and the first regional office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was opened at Bujumbura. Since that time, there has, unfortunately, been no stop to the flow of refugees in the Great Lakes region.

When Prince Louis Rwagasore paid in his own blood the price of Burundi's independence; when His Majesty King Charles Rudahigwa mysteriously died on the eve of the independence of Rwanda; when His Excellency Mr. Patrice Lumumba died under obscure circumstances in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: this began an era of political violence in the Great Lakes region that, unfortunately, continues to this day. In its tireless peace efforts, the United Nations paid a heavy price in that region: Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjøld died over Katanga on a peace mission from which he never returned.

At the time, few realized the power of the ideas that drove this violence that knew no borders; such an understanding would have made it possible to prevent the catastrophe we are witnessing today. But those who understood those ideas have continued to mold them into a true ideology of extermination and genocide. More recently, my country, Burundi, was plunged into unprecedented violence with the tragic death of President Melchior Ndadayé and the genocidal massacres of October 1993. My country understands the depth of pain experienced by peoples subjected to the throes of war, and I wish here to convey our deepest sympathy to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I shall not go beyond those reference points, because my delegation does not wish to shift responsibility for our misfortunes to the political leaders of yesterday, either those of the colonial era or of the young independent

republics of the region. Today's political leaders must absorb the lessons of the history of our countries and must shoulder full responsibility for what will be the history of tomorrow, which will judge the acts we carry out today.

In his statement, the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. André Mwamba Kapanga, named my country eight times with reference to what he called aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In speaking in exercise of my country's right of reply, I wish to rectify some of what he said in order to eliminate any confusion that may have been sown in the minds of representatives.

Burundi harbours no ambition for territorial conquest or political control in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; we want that country to enjoy political and economic stability, in the common interest of its people and of neighbouring peoples, its age-old brethren. Yet we continue to be concerned at the security situation of that country, with which we share our entire western border, both along land and along Lake Tanganyika.

Last September, the President of the Republic of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Pierre Buyoya, clearly said before the General Assembly that

> "We continue to follow very carefully the evolution of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I wish to reaffirm that our country, Burundi, is in no way involved in that conflict. However, we remain concerned, on the one hand, by a certain tenor of statement that pits peoples against peoples on the basis of ethnic identity and, on the other, by militias and certain rebels, whom we in the region remember only too well. I would urge all participants in this conflict not to allow themselves to be entrapped and led down that road, because it leads only to danger that could engulf the entire region in flames.
>
> "Burundi will continue to ensure that its security is not destabilized. To that end, we shall take all appropriate measures. We continue to advocate peaceful means and dialogue to resolve this conflict. If the Government of Burundi is asked to contribute to a political solution, it will be very happy to do so." (*A/53/PV.9, p. 3*)

The Government of the Republic of Burundi is convinced that only a peaceful approach and dialogue can inaugurate a lasting solution to any conflict, armed or unarmed. We are encouraged by what we have heard and by the commitments made by the parties; it appears that all parties are gradually becoming determined to adopt that approach to resolving the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Yet we remain concerned at the disparate alliances of armed groups, militias and even entire armies that had been broken up in their own countries and that are finding the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be fertile ground for their opportunistic pacts.

The Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo himself sounded the alarm in his statement before the Assembly yesterday:

> "The Democratic Republic of the Congo shares more than 9,600 kilometres of land borders with nine countries, 2,000 kilometres of which are with aggressor countries and none of which are without threat or danger from direct or indirect destabilization." (*A/53/PV.95*)

My delegation does not wish to take too much of the Assembly's time, but we want to draw attention to the conclusions of the reports of the International Commission of Inquiry (Rwanda) annexed to documents S/1998/777 and S/1998/1096, on the flow of arms in the Great Lakes region to the armed groups or *génocidaire* militias that, unfortunately, continue to move with impunity in the region, sowing terror among vulnerable civilian populations — or among foreign tourists, so that the international press will provide free publicity for their strike forces.

Resolving the Congo crisis requires a firm commitment by all parties concerned and by all other interested parties to a peaceful political settlement. Here, the two main focuses for a lasting solution of the Congo question are resolving what is a genuine internal conflict through dialogue among all the Congolese parties and addressing the question of the security of common borders with neighbouring countries.

My Government reiterates its full support for the initiatives in the region and those of the Organization of African Unity and will make any necessary contribution to promote a peaceful resolution of the conflict. We are confident because the points of understanding that have been reached by the parties are many and because the few remaining differences will be overcome through negotiations among them. We suggest they respond positively to the mediation initiatives. Stability in the

Great Lakes region depends on the stability of the countries that make up the area, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a key player in this regard.

Furthermore, the excellent idea to hold an international peace conference on the Great Lakes region will bring forth the anticipated fruits as long as it deals with a complete and detailed agenda to which all the parties concerned can agree. We must now begin to work and to forge together the commitment of all to the path of peace and development.

To my colleague from Zimbabwe I would only like to say that exchanging oratorical barbs before the General Assembly of the United Nations will serve only to increase the tensions and widen the differences that are at the source of the current war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I invite him to use better judgement, to put reason before sentiment and to accept the fact that only dialogue and consultation among, first, those involved, and then among other interested parties will be the only way to resolve this conflict, which has brought so much suffering to the innocent peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At a time when the entire world is mobilized to create great and viable economic and political groupings to meet the challenges of globalization, Africa should not get bogged down in wars that dismember States that are already greatly fragmented as a result of the politically expedient borders we inherited through colonial laws.

Mr. Mwamba Kapanga (Democratic Republic of the Congo) *(spoke in French)*: I have asked to take the floor again not to respond to the distortions of the truth by the delegations of the aggressor countries, but merely to shed some light on facts that speak for themselves.

The history of the Congo River basin since 1885 has been marked by a number of assaults on the human rights of its peoples. Since that time the international community has always been involved in the quest for a solution to such crises. The intervention of the United Nations in 1960 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an illustration of this.

Today we speak of armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo because the human consequences since insecurity came to the Great Lakes region have been horrendous. The whole of mankind must mobilize in order to put an end to it, as has happened in the past when the international community has responded to a threat to regional peace and security.

As the Assembly knows, in 1994 a serious act of genocide was perpetrated on Rwandan territory by Rwandans against Rwandans. The international community unanimously condemned the authors of that genocide.

As we clearly heard last Friday in the Security Council from the delegations of Rwanda and Uganda, the proponents of the acts and the ideology of genocide in our region were pursued, killed and massacred when they fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in order to neutralize, dismantle, contain, condemn and isolate them. These massacres have tarnished my country's image and have been at the root of the deterioration of relations between my Government and the international community, as represented by the United Nations. Fortunately, for other reasons, the perpetrators of these atrocious crimes are today revealing their own identities.

The Assembly will recall that the international community, in seeking to be objective with regard to the odious massacres perpetrated in Tingi-Tingi, Mugunga and the province of Equateur, to mention just a few examples, set up the United Nations International Commission of Inquiry (Rwanda). Those who pursued the perpetrators of genocide in order to eliminate them fortunately admitted their offences before the Assembly. Women, children and elderly people perished in those events.

Let the responsibility for those odious massacres no longer be laid before the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Just as the international community condemned those alleged massacres, which verged on genocide, it must today condemn the massacres being committed in the operational zone, which are regularly reported by non-governmental organizations. Today again, my Government has just informed me of the massacre of more than 250 people at Burini-Ngweshe. This is in addition to the more than 100 innocent people killed two days ago at Mangunga, near Uvira.

If Rwandan and Ugandan civilians regularly die at the hands of their rebels, is this a valid reason to kill and massacre the civilian population of the Congo in the regions occupied by their armies? Can they not, by their presence on Congolese territory, provide security for

their civilian populations in their own countries and for Congolese civilians in occupied Congolese territory? How is the Assembly to understand the death of Western tourists when security along the border between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now provided by the Ugandan army? Why should they sow the seeds of genocide among the populations of the eastern provinces of my country through this supposed rebellion?

Let our Assembly not be distracted by the finely embroidered speeches of our aggressors, who in order to spread confusion introduce or ignore facts at will. This is the case, for example, with the delegation of one of the aggressor countries, which has claimed that President Kabila persecuted opponents on the basis of their ethnic origins and banished them in their own country. He cited Mr. Tshisekedi as an example. The head of that delegation knowingly chose not to tell the Assembly that Mr. Tshisekedi and President Kabila are of the same ethnic group.

These types of cleverly omitted little subtleties are the reason why the negotiations aimed at finding a peaceful settlement to the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are becoming bogged down.

These delegations dwell excessively on the domestic situation in my country. How can the opening up of political space in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have anything to do with security in Uganda and Rwanda, unless the idea is to overthrow the established Government in Kinshasa? Can the countries that profess to be models of democracy not wait for truly democratic institutions in order to see their candidates elected through universal suffrage, instead of calling today for the assistance of President Kabila to include their acolytes in the Congolese Government team?

As I said at the beginning of my statement, my concern here is not to respond to the false assertions of the delegations of the aggressor countries, but to shed more light on the situation in order to enable the General Assembly to lead the international community to become more involved in this crisis, as it did in 1960, in order to put an end to the massacres and killings and to ensure respect for human rights. The goal of my statement is to call upon the international community to assist my country in getting through this very difficult period in order to enable it to fulfil the objectives incumbent upon it as a sovereign State.

Mr. Semakula Kiwanuka (Uganda): I exercise my right of reply to contribute not to the negative tone of this debate, but to a positive one, because that is the wish of my Government. Hence, I shall reiterate Uganda's position, namely, that Uganda is committed to the search for a peaceful solution to the war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that Uganda has no territorial ambitions whatsoever on Congolese territory.

Nevertheless, it is important that I refute some of the statements which have been made. Allow me to use the words of Sir Winston Churchill when he referred to honourable members as engaging in "terminological inexactitudes", because, in parliamentary language, you cannot refer to honourable members as liars. Thus, I am responding to the terminological inexactitudes which have been repeated by a number of speakers this afternoon.

It is a fact that Uganda does not have and has never offered military bases for those who are fighting against its neighbours. On the contrary, the Sudan provides bases for those who fight against Uganda. The Sudan has provided peace and security to the Lords Resistance Army, a terror organization which has wreaked havoc on the people of northern Uganda.

The representatives of the Sudan and Zimbabwe have made very serious allegations about the Ugandan political leadership. According to them, Uganda is led by an "oppressive military regime who have refused to hold pluralistic democratic elections". We are not a model of democracy, but I am proud of my country's democratic tradition, which was ushered in under the interim Government led by President Museveni. During the past 13 years, we have held popular elections from the lowest councils to Parliament. We have an inclusive Government because those who murdered our dear ones and vandalized our country were called to join in the present Government in order to build a political consensus and to break the cycle of revenge. Very few leaders elsewhere can do that.

We have a free press to the extent that anybody can call the President of the country names and not be locked up. I cannot challenge the representatives who made those allegations, but I can invite them, and I shall provide free tickets to those representatives to come to Uganda and observe for themselves the level of freedom which Ugandans enjoy and have enjoyed during the past 13 years under the present Government. We have newspapers, privately owned. Journalists are not locked up. We have eight private television channels,

characterized by chat shows throughout the day. Those are things that you do not find in many parts of Africa.

One speaker referred to President Museveni as a great admirer of Hitler. I shall not dignify the allegation that President Museveni is an admirer of Hitler, but the fact that Uganda opposes genocide speaks amply for the fact that President Museveni cannot be an admirer of Hitler.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Human Rights Watch and quite a number of non-governmental organizations have repeatedly and factually stated that Ugandan children have been abducted to the Sudan and are sold into slavery. Those are not statements made by us, though we could make them, but these international organizations have said so. These are facts. Thus, we cannot be accused of manufacturing falsehoods.

There is a war in the southern Sudan. That war began almost 50 years ago. The Ugandan Government under President Museveni cannot be accused of being responsible for that war. The fact that the war has persisted for over 40 years, I think, is a matter that should be put to the Khartoum regime and is not the fault of the Ugandan Government.

Before I end, allow me to cite an Italian thinker of the last century, Gaetano Mosca, who told us that many Europeans were brought up to believe in the history that the Vandals and the Visigoths destroyed the Roman Empire. Mosca said that that claim is a false one — the Roman Empire was already rotten from within and it collapsed because of the internal destruction. I think that what Mosca said about the Visigoths and the Vandals who allegedly destroyed the Roman Empire can be said of those who are stating that the problems in our neighbouring countries are manufactured by Uganda.

Allow me to end as I began by laying emphasis on the positive. I appeal to the members of the General Assembly sitting here today to support the ongoing peaceful initiatives undertaken by the Organization of African Unity, by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and by Libya so that peace and tranquillity may reign in our region, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Mazimhaka (Rwanda): I should like to begin my intervention by correcting a few falsehoods that the representatives who have spoken before me stated about my country.

Rwanda is accused of exclusion, and by that they meant that the Government of Rwanda today practices exclusion. I would like to remind those speakers that, by 1994, there were 3.2 million Rwandan refugees who had been thrown out by Governments in power before the current Government; and we are proud to say that, within two years, we had repatriated all those refugees, who represented almost half the population of the country. If exclusion there was in Rwanda, it was not by this Government.

I would also like to add, and compare notes with those who spoke before me about this issue, that Rwanda has got eight political parties in its Parliament and that five political parties form the coalition that is the Government of National Unity. I believe that those who spoke about democracy and pluralism cannot measure up to that level of openness.

I would like to reaffirm that Rwanda respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our neighbours and to restate that we expect our neighbours to do the same within the provisions of the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Rwanda also supports the peace efforts that are enshrined in the Lusaka process, led by President Chiluba of Zambia. We believe that that is the only way that the Congolese crisis can be resolved in a peaceful manner.

When we are making progress, apparently some countries become more and more pessimistic and more and more anxious about that process. I am glad to inform the Assembly that I was advised by my Government that President Chiluba has agreed to treat the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy as an equal at the negotiating table. As members may recall, yesterday that was stated as one of the two remaining obstacles to a negotiated settlement. I hope that this was done and said in earnest and that we are going to see negotiations resuming on an even keel very soon.

The remaining points that were raised yesterday were the question of the disarmament of the rebels and so on. My Government believes that once the parties are seated together at the table, that is a negotiable issue on which we do not have to comment.

I must conclude by thanking you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to reply to issues raised during this important debate.

Mr. Ahmed (Sudan) *(spoke in Arabic):* We are taking the floor to exercise our right of reply with respect to the claims made by the Ambassador of Uganda, who has consistently tried to deceive representatives and, as we heard yesterday, is attempting also to deceive the international community by presenting a series of lies in order to justify the invasion by Uganda of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The issue that are dealing with today is crystal-clear and unambiguous: the invasion by Uganda of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. What is the relationship of the Sudan to that issue? We know that Uganda is seeking to drag it into this conflict. It is seeking also to find extraneous reasons to justify its flagrant invasion of the Democratic Republic of the Congo — reasons which no one in the international community would believe.

The representative of Uganda recently claimed that his country is not providing bases for rebels in southern Sudan. I challenge him to deny that in February Uganda hosted a military resistance meeting whose goal was to wreak havoc on the Government of the Sudan and in which all the officials of Uganda took part. But the lies continue. The Ugandan representative claims that his country has no expansionist interests in the Congo, but Musuveni's conspiracies in the Great Lakes region have resulted in lakes of blood being shed. This is a throwback to the time of the Nazis and to the ages of darkness and genocide.

The President of Uganda and his circle are corrupt individuals who are seeking to plunder the riches of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The whole world is fully aware of the corruption that is rife there. That is the democracy which the representative of Uganda is flaunting.

This conflict in southern Sudan, which is an African conflict, is of interest to all sons of Africa. It must be resolved through dialogue and peaceful negotiations through the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), an African organization that is interested in this issue and whose State members in eastern Africa include Uganda.

But what facts could Uganda present to IGADD other than these: by invading southern Sudan, it has worsened the problem in that region; it is financing the rebels and terrorists; and it has established camps for them there. The facts surrounding Uganda's support for the rebels are crystal-clear and require no comment on our part. But the representative of Uganda continues with his lies. Aggression is aggression, and, for that reason, the Sudan reiterates its condemnation of this act of aggression.

We call on Uganda immediately to withdraw its forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to cease its attempts to deceive the international community by speaking of a peaceful solution and saying that Uganda has no ambitions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or in neighbouring countries.

The Acting President: We have concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 167.

Organization of work

The Acting President: Before adjourning the meeting, I should like to say a few words about an urgent matter which was addressed by the President of the Assembly yesterday afternoon in this Hall.

As members are aware, a consensus has not yet been reached on the date for the opening of the fifty-fourth session, and as a consequence, a consensus has also not yet been reached on the dates of the general debate of the fifty-fourth session and the dates of the two-day special session on Small Islands Developing States.

The question of those dates has become an extremely pressing issue for delegations. As concerns the general debate of the fifty-fourth session, the Secretariat has been receiving numerous enquiries from delegations anxious to know the dates of the general debate so that arrangements can be made for their high-level officials attending that part of the fifty-fourth session.

The President and recently myself, as Acting President, have conducted extensive consultations on the question of those dates. I understand that consultations are still ongoing, and I urge Member States involved in those consultations to reach a consensus as soon as possible.

I can only stress the urgency of this matter and the utmost importance of reaching soon a consensus on those dates. If we fail to do so in the immediate future, the arrangements to be made in capitals and at Headquarters for the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and for the special session on Small Island Developing States would be severely affected, to the detriment of all concerned.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.